

## Something Good From Each Experience by Craig Elliott

Vol. 3: Issue 12: Winter 2010

SEVERAL WEEKS BACK I made an expensive mistake with my primary drive, a '01 Eclipse Spyder. Say what you want about my mechanical inability, but the bottom line is this: I did not pay close attention to the maintenance schedule or I would have noticed the line about replacing the timing belt at 60K miles. I haven't driven a car with that requirement in a while, and this happens to be a non-clearance engine. That means bent valves, all twenty-four of them. It happened two hours from my house, so I chose to have it towed to a local shop near the Georgia/North Carolina border. It took several weeks for the repairs to be completed, mostly due to a two-week backup at the local machine shop where the head was taken for resurfacing. My son accompanied me on the two-hour drive to pick it up, soaking up the mountain views as we approached the garage. Afterwards he joined me for breakfast at a local diner before driving back.

My two daughters were in the vehicle with me the day my car broke down. We sat for an hour at a pull off where the belt snapped. We ended up talking to three different locals that stopped to help, all very eccentric, each one of them worth writing about. One man was trying to sell painted mailboxes after telling me all that is wrong with the world, another had pulled in to roll his tobacco and didn't even know we were there (his words, not mine,) and the other guy just wanted to see what was going on. It will worry me when my girls are both driving by themselves after seeing who stopped to help. They deserve a thank you for their concern, but still, I will be worried.

After the car was towed a few miles back stream, the garage desk operator suggested we walk down to the breakfast house while we waited for our ride to arrive, a short walk from the highway. We arrived at the diner after the girls jumped mud puddles and complained about the high grass and chiggers. Nothing but locals and a guy (me) with his chatty daughters. No one seemed too concerned about us as we enjoyed a nice lunch. A sign mounted on the wall behind the counter where the bill was to be paid read: *We cook food to order. It takes time. If you want fast food, there is a McDonald's in town.*

So my son and I made the return trip to eat, this time driving from the garage to the diner. I decided on pancakes, large ones. I went up front to pay. The lady behind the register counter was the same one who took the order, brought out the food, and refilled our drinks. I suspect she is the owner. She seemed to be a kind, gentle soul. As I was paying, I mentioned to her how much I liked the two black and white studio framed portraits on the wall. Both featured a baby, and one photo had the dad, one had the mom. The lady's eyes lit up. She told me about the photographer who took these photos at a local event. "I have something else you would probably enjoy," she said.

We completed our transaction and the woman took me through a closed door into a secondary dining area, one that must be reserved for peak times. She switched on the overhead fluorescent lights and pointed to a large painting on the outside

wall, mounted between two windows. The painting showed two boys dressed in overalls, sitting on hay bales, with a pig in the foreground. Looked like a country fair scene. The two boys were her two grandsons, and the painting was made from a photograph taken of them recently. The photo was nice, but the story behind it made it more special. The artist, a friend of the woman, suffered a stroke before painting the work of art. The artist had to hold her hand on the arm she painted with to keep it steady. After the disability, the artist had to relearn, and figure out how to overcome the obstacles to keep doing what she loved. As we left the room the woman turned the lights back off and said, "Wish I could paint like that. I can't even draw a straight line. Guess I'm just here to takes money and wait tables."

I told her kind words can touch people and you may never know what you've done for the other person.

The woman agreed. "We all have a purpose, I guess," she said.

She talked about the painting, saying when she looked at the older boy, probably around eight or nine years old, she saw everything about him. The personality just jumped off the canvas. She pointed to the eyes, and said they were captured just right. It seemed the artist was looking straight into his heart and mind and pulled everything out, through those beautiful eyes.



**CRAIG ELLIOTT** is the owner of *EE Productions*. He is a portrait and media photographer with corporate background in telecommunications. His passion is photography. Craig is currently working on his first book.

CONTACT: [craig@eephotography.net](mailto:craig@eephotography.net)

Copyright 2010 Impact Times. The information contained in this article may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or otherwise distributed without the prior written authority of Impact Times.